

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau
ACF Region II

FINAL REPORT

NEW JERSEY CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

FINAL REPORT – MAY 21, 2004

Final Report: New Jersey Child and Family Services Review Executive Summary

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of New Jersey for the period October 1, 2002 through March 22, 2004. The CFSR assesses State performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well being and on seven systemic factors related to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. The New Jersey CFSR was conducted the week of March 22, 2004. The New Jersey CFSR findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS).
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provided State child welfare data for the years 2000 through 2002;
- Reviews of 50 cases at 3 sites in the State (Atlantic County [Atlantic City], Essex County [Newark], and Ocean County [Toms River]) and interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to, children, parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The New Jersey CFSR found that the State is not in substantial conformity with any of the seven child welfare outcomes assessed through the CFSR. The three areas of greatest concern pertained to Safety Outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate), Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations), and Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs).

Safety Outcome 2 was determined to be substantially achieved in only 48 percent of the cases and performance on this outcome was low in all three CFSR sites. A key concern identified with regard to this outcome was that DYFS is not consistent in providing services to ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes.

Permanency Outcome 1 was determined to be substantially achieved in only 28 percent of the foster care cases reviewed during the x CFSR. The CFSR found that DYFS generally makes concerted efforts to prevent re-entry into foster care, but is less consistent in its efforts to (1) ensure children's placement stability while in foster care, (2) establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner, and (3) achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner.

Well-Being Outcome 1 was determined to be substantially achieved in only 18 percent of the cases reviewed as part of the CFSR. Each indicator for this outcome was rated as an Area Needing Improvement. The CFSR found that DYFS does not make concerted efforts to meet the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents; involve children and parents in the case planning process; or establish face-to-face contact with children and parents with sufficient frequency to ensure children's safety and well-being.

As noted throughout this report, case review findings varied substantively between in-home services cases (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained with their families and no child in the family was in out-of-home care) and foster care cases (cases in which the State child welfare agency had care and placement responsibility and the child was in an out-of-home placement at some time during the CFSR period under review). For all relevant outcomes, indicators were more likely to be rated Area Needing Improvement in the in-home services cases than in the foster care cases. This difference was particularly noteworthy for Safety Outcome 2 and Well-Being Outcome 1.

With regard to the seven systemic factors, the CFSR determined that the State was in substantial conformity with the factor of Statewide Information System. The State did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Case Review System, Quality Assurance System, Training, Service Array, Agency Responsiveness to the Community, and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. With regard to the Case Review System, the CFSR found that although DYFS had established policies and procedures intended to attain permanency in a timely manner, these policies and procedures were not being implemented in a consistent manner. Concerns noted that relate to the role of the court include permanency hearings that are not being held in a timely manner; delays in achieving TPR; and inconsistency in notification of reviews and hearings to foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers. Key concerns related to other systemic factors included the following: (1) a lack of adequate services to address the needs of children and families, (2) a training program that was not adequate to ensure the development of the necessary case practice skills, and (3) the absence of a comprehensive quality assurance system.

The overall findings with regard to the State's performance on the safety and permanency outcomes are presented in Table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in Table 2. Table 3 presents the State's performance relative to the national standards and Table 4 provides information pertaining to the State's substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. A summary of major findings is presented below.

I. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.

Safety Outcome 1 incorporates two indicators. One pertains to the timeliness of initiating a response to a child maltreatment report (item 1), and the other relates to whether children experience a recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment (item 2).

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 81.6 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity.
- The State did not meet the national standards for (1) the percentage of children experiencing more than one substantiated or indicated child maltreatment report within a 6-month period, or (2) the percentage of children maltreated by a foster parent or facility staff person.

A key CFSR finding is that DYFS is not consistent with regard to initiating investigations of child maltreatment reports or establishing face-to-face contact with the child who was the subject of the report in accordance with State-established timeframes. Of the 12 maltreatment reports that were not responded to within State timeframes (some cases had multiple reports during the period under review), 9 were classified as requiring an immediate response (within 24 hours). Delays in responding to these 9 reports ranged from 2 days to 2 months.

Although the State Data Profile indicates that DYFS does not meet the national standard for maltreatment recurrence within a 6-month period, the case reviews found repeat maltreatment within 6 months in only 2 cases. However, in five cases, reviewers noted that a maltreatment allegation had been received on an open case and action had not been taken to make a formal report and investigate the allegation. According to information in the Statewide Assessment, this practice is contrary to DYFS policy.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate.

Performance on Safety Outcome 2 is assessed through two indicators. One indicator (item 3) addresses the child welfare agency's efforts to prevent the removal of children from their homes by providing services to the families that ensure children's safety while they remain in their homes. The other indicator (item 4) pertains to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in reducing risk of harm to children.

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with Safety Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was substantially achieved in 48.0 percent of the applicable cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for a rating of substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome differed considerably as a function of the type of case (i.e., in-home services cases or foster care cases). The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 68 percent of the foster care cases compared to only 28 percent of the in-home services cases.

A key concern identified during the CFSR was that DYFS was not consistent with regard to providing services to ensure children's safety while remaining in the home. In the majority (60%) of the in-home services cases, reviewers noted that the children were in unsafe situations in their homes and DYFS either was not aware of the situation or was aware of the situation, but had not taken sufficient action to address the safety issues. In these cases, reviewers indicated that the children were in unsafe situations because the caseworker did not have adequate knowledge about the family's circumstances due to infrequent contacts with the children and parents and a failure to conduct safety assessments on an ongoing basis. These problems were attributed primarily to the large caseloads carried by DYFS caseworkers.

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

There are six indicators incorporated in the assessment of Permanency Outcome 1, although not all of them are relevant for all children. The indicators pertain to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in preventing foster care re-entry (item 5), ensuring placement stability for children in foster care (item 6), and establishing appropriate permanency goals for children in foster care in a timely manner (item 7). Depending on the child's permanency goal, the remaining indicators focus on the child welfare agency's success in achieving permanency goals (such as reunification, guardianship, adoption, and permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner (items 8 and 9), or whether children who have "other planned living arrangements" as a case goal are in stable placements and adequately prepared for eventual independent living (item 10).

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 1. This determination was based on the following findings:

- The outcome was substantially achieved in 28.0 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.
- The State Data Profile indicates that for fiscal year (FY) 2002, the State did not meet the national standards for (1) the percentage of children adopted who achieved a finalized adoption within 24 months of entry into foster care; (2) the percentage

of children in foster care for less than 12 months who experienced no more than 2 placements, and (3) the percentage of children reunified who were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care.

The State met the national standard of 8.6 percent or less for the percent of children entering foster care who were entering within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

A key finding of the CFSR case review was that DYFS is effective in preventing re-entry into foster care. However, all other indicators for this outcome were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. Case reviews indicate that the child welfare agency was not consistent in its efforts to (1) ensure children's placement stability while in foster care, (2) establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner, and (3) achieve children's permanency goals in a timely manner.

Information from the case reviews and stakeholder interviews indicates that key barriers to attaining permanency in a timely manner are (1) a lack of concurrent planning (and a misunderstanding of the practice of concurrent planning), (2) a practice of maintaining a goal of reunification for long periods of time, even when the prognosis for reunification is low, (3) a lack of adequate services for families, including visitation services for children and parents to support reunification, (4) the length of the TPR process, (5) high caseloads that impact caseworkers' ability to complete their tasks in a timely manner, and (6) scarcity of Independent Living services for youth (e.g. life skills training) that results in youth not receiving these services until they are close to the time of emancipation.

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Permanency Outcome 2 incorporates six indicators that assess the child welfare agency's performance with regard to (1) placing children in foster care in close proximity to their parents and relatives (item 11), (2) placing siblings together (item 12), (3) ensuring frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care (item 13), (4) preserving connections of children in foster care with extended family, community, cultural heritage, religion, and schools (item 14), (5) seeking relatives as potential placement resources (item 15), and (6) promoting the relationship between children and their parents while the children are in foster care (item 16).

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with Permanency Outcome 2. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 70.8 percent of the cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity.

CFSR case review findings indicate that DYFS makes concerted efforts to place children in close proximity to their families. However, the findings also indicate a lack of consistent effort on the part of DYFS to (1) place siblings together in foster care whenever appropriate, (2) promote frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, (3) seek and assess relatives as placement resources, (4) preserve children's connections to their families and heritage, and (5) support or strengthen the parent-child relationship.

Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Well-Being Outcome 1 incorporates four indicators. One pertains to the child welfare agency's efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and that the necessary services are provided to meet identified needs (item 17). A second indicator examines the child welfare agency's effectiveness with regard to actively involving parents and children (when appropriate) in the case planning process (item 18). The two remaining indicators examine the frequency and quality of caseworker's contacts with the children in their caseloads (item 19) and with the children's parents (item 20).

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 1. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 18.0 percent of the cases reviewed, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome differed considerably as a function of type of case. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 36 percent of foster care cases compared to 0 in-home services cases. Ratings for all of the indicators for this outcome exhibited this difference.

Case reviews resulted in the finding that all indicators for Well-Being Outcome 1 were rated as an Area Needing Improvement. DYFS was found to be inconsistent in its efforts to (1) assess children, parents, and foster parents for services and provide necessary services, (2) involve parents and children in the case planning process, or (3) establish sufficient face-to-face contact between agency case workers and the children and parents in their caseloads. The low level of performance on these indicators was attributed primarily to the large caseloads carried by DYFS caseworkers. Stakeholders expressed the opinion that the size of the caseloads hinders the ability of workers to conduct comprehensive needs assessments and establish frequent contacts with the children and parents in their caseloads.

Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

There is only one indicator for Well-Being Outcome 2. It pertains to the child welfare agency's effectiveness in addressing and meeting the educational needs of children in both foster care and in-home services cases (item 21).

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 2. This determination is based on the finding that the outcome was achieved in 64.7 percent of the cases reviewed, which does not meet the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome differed considerably as a function of type of case. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of foster care cases compared to 36 percent of in-home services cases.

The primary case review finding was that DYFS was not consistent in its efforts to address education-related needs of children in the in-home services cases, even when an education-related intervention was warranted. For the foster care cases, reviewers determined that DYFS made concerted efforts to meet children's education-related needs in most, but not all, cases.

Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

This outcome incorporates two indicators that assess the child welfare agency's efforts to meet children's physical health (item 22) and mental health (item 23) needs.

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with Well-Being Outcome 3. This determination was based on the finding that the outcome was rated as substantially achieved in 53.2 percent of the applicable cases, which is less than the 90 percent required for substantial conformity. Performance on this outcome differed considerably as a function of type of case. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 76 percent of foster care cases compared to 24 percent of in-home services cases.

The CFSR case reviews found that the child welfare agency was not consistently effective in meeting children's physical and mental health needs. The primary concerns identified pertained to lack of effort to address these needs of children in most of the in-home cases reviewed.

II. KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Statewide Information System

Substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System is determined by whether the State is operating a Statewide information system that can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care (item 24).

New Jersey is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Statewide Information System. The existing Statewide mainframe system (SIS), although not always easy to navigate or immediate in response, is able to identify the status, demographics, location, and case goals for children currently in foster care. While New Jersey's information system can produce the data required, it is not an automated case management system with tools to assist workers and supervisors with decision-making and daily case management. The development of a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) is underway.

Case Review System

Five indicators are used to assess the State's performance with regard to the systemic factor of Case Review System. The indicators examine the development of case plans and parent involvement in that process (item 25), the consistency of 6-month case reviews (item 26) and 12-month permanency hearings (item 27), the implementation of procedures to seek termination of parental rights (TPR) in accordance with the timeframes established in the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (item 28), and the notification and inclusion of foster and pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers in case reviews and hearings (item 29).

The State of New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Case Review System. The CFSR determined that:

- Case plans are not developed jointly with the child's parent on a consistent basis.
- DYFS is not consistent with regard to conducting a case review for all children in foster care at least once every 6 months.
- Permanency hearings are not consistently conducted every 12 months for children in foster care.
- Although the State has established a process for TPR in accordance with the provisions of the ASFA, there are delays in filing for, and achieving, TPR.

- DYFS and the courts are not consistent with regard to ensuring that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard, in all case reviews or hearings held with respect to the child.

Quality Assurance System

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System is based on whether the State has developed standards to ensure the safety and health of children in foster care (item 30), and whether the State is operating a statewide quality assurance system that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of services and measures program strengths and areas needing improvement (item 31).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. The CFSR determined that (1) the State has not implemented procedures to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children, and (2) the State does not have a comprehensive Quality Assurance System that measures program strengths and areas needing improvement on a Statewide basis.

Training

The systemic factor of Training incorporates an assessment of the State's new caseworker training program (item 32), ongoing training for child welfare agency staff (item 33), and training for foster and adoptive parents (item 34).

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Training. The CFSR determined that the initial training for DYFS staff is insufficient to address the goals and objectives contained in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and the services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E. In addition, the CSFR found that training was not sufficient to link caseworker skills and competencies to key outcome measures; DYFS does not require ongoing training for staff to ensure continuous staff development; and DYFS does not provide staff with sufficient opportunities to access ongoing training.

Despite these concerns, the CFSR found that the State's training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities adequately addresses the skills and knowledge necessary for providers to carry out their responsibilities with regard to foster and adoptive children.

Service Array

The assessment of the systemic factor of Service Array addresses three questions: (1) Does the State have in place an array of services to meet the needs of children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 35)?, (2) Are these services accessible to families and children throughout the State (item 36)?, (3) Can services be individualized to meet the unique needs of the children and families served by the child welfare agency (item 37)?

New Jersey did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Service Array. The CFSR determined that the State does not have in place a sufficient array of services that would enable children to remain safely with their parents when appropriate or would help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency. Critical gaps in the service array are bilingual services, therapeutic foster care services, insufficient family preservation services, substance abuse treatment services (particularly for women with children), and mental health services for children and parents. In addition, services are not available to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP, and where services are available, long waiting lists often impede accessibility of those services. Finally, the CFSR found that DYFS does not provide staff with the tools to permit them to individualize services for all children and families served by the agency. Stakeholders reported that inadequate and/or infrequent communication between DYFS and contracted service providers is an additional impediment to ensuring that services are tailored to meet the unique needs of children and families.

Agency Responsiveness to the Community

Performance with regard to the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community incorporates an assessment of the State's consultation with external stakeholders in developing the CFSP (items 38 and 39), and the extent to which the State coordinates child welfare services with services or benefits of other Federal or federally-assisted programs serving the same population (item 40).

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Agency Responsiveness to the Community. The CFSR determined that although DYFS makes concerted efforts to coordinate services with other Federal or Federally funded programs, the agency does not make sufficient efforts to engage external and internal stakeholders in developing the CFSP or in preparing the annual progress reports with regard to the Plan.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention

The assessment of this systemic factor focuses on the State's standards for foster homes and child care institutions (items 41 and 42), the State's compliance with Federal requirements for criminal background checks for foster and adoptive parents (item 43), the State's efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of foster children (item 44), and the State's activities with regard to using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate permanent placements for waiting children.

New Jersey is not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The CFSR determined that although New Jersey has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions that are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards, the standards are not equally applied to relative caregiver homes. In addition, there is no comprehensive process to ensure the adequate recruitment of potential foster and adoptive homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom homes are needed.

The CFSR found that the State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements. In addition, the State has a process to use cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.

NJ Child Welfare Plan

It was reported during the onsite CFSR that the Department of Human Services and the New Jersey Child Welfare Panel had reached agreement in principle on a draft child welfare plan, entitled "A New Beginning: The Future of Child Welfare in New Jersey" (The Child Welfare Plan). The Child Welfare Panel is a court-appointed expert panel overseeing the child welfare reform effort in New Jersey as part of a settlement of a class action suit filed on behalf of foster children by Children's Rights, Inc. in 1999. It is expected that the final plan can be approved and forwarded to the Federal District Court by June 2004. The plan outlines major changes in the areas of recruiting, retaining and supporting resource families; programs for adolescents; use of institutional programs; case practice; expanding core services; community partnerships; the workforce, accountability and quality assurance.

Table 1: New Jersey CFSR Ratings for Safety and Permanency Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings			Item Ratings		
	<i>In Substantial Conformity?</i>	<i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i>	<i>Met National Standards?</i>	<i>Rating**</i>	<i>Percent Strength</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>
Safety Outcome 1-Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	No	81.6	No			
Item 1: Timeliness of investigations				ANI	74	
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment				ANI	96	No
Safety Outcome 2 - Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	No	48.0				
Item 3: Services to prevent removal				ANI	44	
Item 4: Risk of harm				ANI	50	
Permanency Outcome 1- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	No	28.0	Met 1, did not meet 3			
Item 5: Foster care re-entry				Strength	100	Yes
Item 6: Stability of foster care placements				ANI	76	No
Item 7: Permanency goal for child				ANI	60	
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship and placement with relatives				ANI	29	No
Item 9: Adoption				ANI	29	No
Item 10: Other planned living arrangement				ANI	75	
Permanency Outcome 2 - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	No	70.8				
Item 11: Proximity of placement				Strength	94	
Item 12: Placement with siblings				ANI	79	
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care				ANI	67	
Item 14: Preserving connections				ANI	79	
Item 15: Relative placement				ANI	65	
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents				ANI	61	

*90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

Table 2: New Jersey CFSR Ratings for Child and Family Well Being Outcomes and Items

Outcomes and Indicators	Outcome Ratings		Item Ratings			
	<i>In Substantial Conformity?</i>	<i>Percent Substantially Achieved*</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>	<i>Rating**</i>	<i>Percent Strength</i>	<i>Met National Standards</i>
Well Being Outcome 1 - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	No	18.0				
Item 17: Needs/services of child, parents, and foster parents				ANI	32	
Item 18: Child/family involvement in case planning				ANI	20	
Item 19: Worker visits with child				ANI	34	
Item 20: Worker visits with parents				ANI	23	
Well Being Outcome 2 - Children receive services to meet their educational needs	No	64.7				
Item 21: Educational needs of child				ANI	68	
Well Being Outcome 3 - Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	No	53.2				
Item 22: Physical health of child				ANI	76	
Item 23: Mental health of child				ANI	50	

*90 percent of the applicable cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome for the State to be in substantial conformity with the outcome.

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

Table 3: New Jersey Performance on the Six Outcome Measures for which National Standards have been established

Outcome Measure	National Standard	New Jersey Data FY 2002
Of all children who were victims of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment report in the first 6 months of CY 2001, what percent were victims of another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period?	6.1% or less	6.9%
Of all children who were in foster care in the first 9 months of CY 2001, what percent experienced maltreatment from foster parents or facility staff members?	0.57% or less	0.69%
Of all children who entered foster care in FY 2001, what percent were re-entering care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?	8.6% or less	8.2%
Of all children reunified from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were reunified within 12 months of entry into foster care?	76.2% or more	63.5%
Of all children who were adopted from foster care in FY 2001, what percent were adopted within 24 months of their entry into foster care?	32.0% or more	17.0%
Of all children in foster care during FY 2001 for less than 12 months, what percent experienced no more than 2 placement settings?	86.7% or more	85.1%

Table 4: New Jersey CFSR Ratings for the Seven Systemic Factors

Systemic Factors	In Substantial Conformity?*	Rating**
IV. Statewide Information System	Yes (3)	
Item 24: System can identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals of children in foster care		Strength
V. Case Review System	No (1)	
Item 25: Process for developing a case plan and for joint case planning with parents		ANI
Item 26: Process for 6-month case reviews		ANI
Item 27: Process for 12-month permanency hearings		ANI
Item 28: Process for seeking TPR in accordance with ASFA		ANI
Item 29: Process for notifying caregivers of reviews and hearings and for opportunity for them to be heard		ANI
VI. Quality Assurance System	No (1)	
Item 30: Standards to ensure quality services and ensure children's safety and health		ANI
Item 31: Identifiable QA system that evaluates the quality of services and improvements		ANI
VII. Training	No (2)	
Item 32: Provision of initial staff training		ANI
Item 33: Provision of ongoing staff training that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge.		ANI
Item 34: Provision of training for caregivers and adoptive parents that addresses the necessary skills and knowledge		Strength
VIII. Service Array	No (1)	
Item 35: Availability of array of critical services		ANI
Item 36: Accessibility of services across all jurisdictions		ANI
Item 37: Ability to individualize services to meet unique needs		ANI
IX. Agency Responsiveness to the Community	No (2)	
Item 38: Engages in ongoing consultation with critical stakeholders in developing the CFSP		ANI
Item 39: Develops annual progress reports in consultation with stakeholders		ANI
Item 40: Coordinates services with other Federal programs		Strength
X. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention	No (2)	
Item 41: Standards for foster family and child care institutions		Strength
Item 42: Standards are applied equally to all foster family and child care institutions		ANI
Item 43: Conducts necessary criminal background checks		Strength
Item 44: Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive families that reflect children's racial and ethnic diversity		ANI
Item 45: Uses cross-jurisdictional resources to find placements		Strength

*Systemic factors are rated on a scale from 1 to 4. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates "Not in Substantial Conformity." A rating of 3 or 4 indicates Substantial Conformity

**Items may be rated as a Strength or an Area Needing Improvement (ANI).

FINAL REPORT NEW JERSEY CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of New Jersey. The CFSR assesses State performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well being and on seven systemic factors related to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. The New Jersey CFSR was conducted the week of March 22, 2004. The New Jersey CFSR findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

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- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 2000 through 2002;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites in the State (Atlantic County [Atlantic City], Essex County [Newark], and Ocean County [Toms River]) and interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

The key characteristics of the 50 cases reviewed are the following:

- Twenty-four cases were reviewed in Essex County, 12 cases in Atlantic County, and 14 cases in Ocean County.
- All 50 cases had been open cases at some time during the period under review, which was from October 1, 2002 to March 22, 2004.
- 25 cases were "foster care cases" (cases in which the State child welfare agency had care and placement responsibility and the child was in an out-of-home placement at some time during the period under review), and 25 were "in-home services cases" (cases in which families received services from the child welfare agency while children remained with their families and no child in the family was in out-of-home care during the period under review).

- Of the 25 foster care cases, 16 children (64 %) were younger than age 10 at the start of the period under review; 3 children (12%) were at least 10 years old, but not yet 13 years old; and 6 children (24%) were 13 years of age or older at the start of the period under review.
- Of the 25 foster care cases, 16 children were male (64%) and 9 were female (36%).
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, there were 27 cases (54%) in which all children in the family were African American (non-Hispanic); 13 cases (26%) in which all children in the family were White (non-Hispanic); 7 cases (14%) in which all children in the family were Hispanic; 2 cases (4%) in which children in the family were of 2 or more races/ethnicity; and 1 case (2%) in which all children in the family were Asian American.
- In reviewing the 50 cases, reviewers identified the following as the primary reason for the opening of a child welfare agency case:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 20 cases (40%)
 - Substance abuse by parents – 12 cases (24%)
 - Physical abuse – 9 cases (18%)
 - Sexual abuse – 4 cases (8%)
 - Medical Neglect – 2 cases (4%)
 - Mental/physical health of child – 2 cases (4%)
 - Abandonment – 1 case (2%)
- Of the 50 cases reviewed, the most frequently cited of all reasons for children coming to the attention of the child welfare agency were the following:
 - Neglect (not including medical neglect) – 37 cases (74% of cases)
 - Substance abuse by parents – 27 cases (54% of cases)
 - Physical abuse – 12 cases (24% of cases)
- In 18 (72%) of the 25 foster care cases, the child entered foster care prior to the period under review and remained in care during the entire period under review.

It was reported during the onsite CFSR, that the Department of Human Services and the New Jersey Child Welfare Panel had reached an agreement in principle on a draft child welfare plan, entitled “A New Beginning: The Future of Child Welfare in New Jersey” (The Child Welfare Plan). The Child Welfare Panel is a court-appointed expert panel overseeing the child welfare reform effort in New Jersey, as part of a settlement of a class action suit filed on behalf of foster children by Children’s Rights, Inc. in 1999. It is expected that the final plan can be approved and forwarded to the Federal District Court by June 2004. The plan outlines major changes in the

areas of recruiting, retaining and supporting resource families; programs for adolescents; use of institutional programs; case practice; expanding core services; community partnerships; the workforce, accountability and quality assurance.

The first section of this report presents CFSR findings relevant to the State's performance in achieving specific outcomes for children in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. For each outcome, there is a table presenting key findings, a discussion of the State's status with regard to the outcome, and a presentation and discussion of each item (indicator) assessed. The second section of the report provides an assessment and discussion of the seven systemic factors relevant to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve positive outcomes for children.